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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 22, 2008

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**Georgia Expands Health Care Options Statewide**

*State Health Benefit Plan Advances Health Benefits Transformation and Consumerism*

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) announced the completion of the competitive procurement for the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) health insurance plan options. CIGNA HealthCare and United Healthcare were awarded statewide contracts to provide health care coverage to Georgia's state employees. The new health plan contracts will be effective January 1, 2009.

"Innovation in health care ensures new choices and opportunities to improve the health and well being of our members," said Dr. Rhonda Medows, Commissioner, DCH. "Both CIGNA and United Healthcare demonstrated established, comprehensive statewide provider access for our 700,000 members as well as offering our members access to innovative wellness programs and leading-edge disease state management programs."

SHBP members statewide will have access to an expanded provider network and will have the choice of enrolling in any of the following plan options offered by both CIGNA and United Healthcare: Health Reimbursement Account (HRA), High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP), Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) or Medicare Advantage Private Fee-for-Service Plan.

"The consolidation from three to two health care vendors is part of SHBP's transformation strategy that focuses on enhanced provider access statewide, consumerism, administrative effectiveness and year-over-year financial savings," said Nancy Goldstein, Director, SHBP. "Over the past year SHBP shared our strategic plan with a wide audience of stakeholders, including members of the General Assembly, SHBP members, state agencies, school districts, retirees and the general public. We are confident that this plan to transform SHBP will deliver enhanced choice and services while keeping health care affordable for our members."

SHBP will conduct intensive member outreach and education on members' plan options prior to and during the state's Open Enrollment. Open Enrollment for the new plans will run October 10, 2008 – November 10, 2008. Members with questions should call the SHBP Call Center at 1-800-610-1863.

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